CHAPTER III

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Born as the *Chhotrai* or the second son of the Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo, and though not expected to ascend the throne of Mayurbhanj, Pratap Chandra was destined to be the last king of the Bhanja dynasty. Maharaja Purna Chandra Bhanja Deo, met a sudden and premature death, at the early age of twenty-nine, after a brief reign of eight years, on 21April 1928, at Bombay, where he had gone to attend a conference of the Princes in connection with the Butler Committee[1] . The dead body of Purna Chandra was brought from Bombay by a special train to Rupsa, and thence to Baripada.[2] As his dead body was kept in the Gol verandah inside the Palace, hundreds of people went to pay their last respect.[3] Purna Chandra was childless and he was succeeded by his younger brother Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo on 23 April 1928. He ruled Mayurbhanj from 1928 till its merger with Orissa in 1949. His reign assumes great importance, as he was the last of the rulers to ascend the Bhanja throne. His reign witnessed freedom struggle, *Praja Mandal* movement in the State and the bitter controversy and conflict over the question of merger of Mayurbhanj.

Early Life and Accession :

Pratap Chandra was educated at Mayo College, Ajmer, and did his B.Sc from Muir Central College, Allahabad. He had also worked as the Chairman of Baripada Municipality for some years. On 25 November 1925, he was married to Maharani Prem Kumari, the daughter of Raj Kumar Sardar Singhji and grand daughter of Rajadhiraj Sir Nahar Singhji K.C.I.E. of Shahpura State in Rajputana. He had visited England with his late brother in 1924 and again in 1926.[4] On the day Maharaja ascended the throne several ruling chiefs of Orissa and other dignitaries attended the funeral ceremony and the mourners included the Rajas of Talcher, Nilgiri and Hindol, Mr. J.E.Scott I.C.S., Political Agent and Commissioner of Orissa Feudatory States, Prafulla Chandra Bhanja Deo, Maharaja of Bastar, Rani Saheba of Bastar, Maharana Raj Saheb of Wankaner and Maharaj Kumar Umed Singh of Shahpura.[5] After the accession,Pratap Chandra was formally recognised by the Government of India,through the Political Agent and Commissioner of Orissa Feudatory States,on 16 June 1928.[6]

Because of the efficient, enlightened and progressive administration of the State,the Government of India in March 1931 abrogated the restrictions on the powers of the Maharaja imposed by the *Sanad* and gave to Pratap Chandra the right to exercise full power of internal administration. In the same year he was nominated as a member of the Chamber of Princes under Article 2A(ii) of the Constitution of the Chamber of Princes.[7] His Excellency,the Viceroy of India in his letter dated 9 March

1931, addressed to the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, made the following observations while admitting the Maharaja as a permanent member of the Chamber :

> " It (Mayurbhanj) is by far the largest among the Bihar and Orissa States which have as yet no permanent member in the Chamber. With an area of over 4,000 sq. miles and revenue of some Rs. 30 lakhs, it is obviously fit to stand among the larger Indian States; and I have satisfied myself that its administration is efficient, enlightened and progressive. I have, therefore, with the concurrence of Bihar and Orissa Governments, cancelled the specific restrictions in the Mayurbhanj *Sanad*, which would prevent its being considered a State with full internal jurisdiction and have decided to summon the Maharaja for the forthcoming Chamber session as a full member. " [8]

Since 1 April 1933, Mayurbhanj State, which was formerly under the Governments of Bihar and Orissa, was placed in direct political relation

with the Government of India through an Agent to the Governor General designated "Agent to the Governor General, Eastern States Agency" Subsequently, with effect from 1 December 1936, Tripura, Coochbehar and Mayurbhanj were formed into a separate Agency known as "Bengal States" with headquarters at Calcutta. The State paid an annual tribute of Rs. 1067-11-9 and enjoyed a permanent salute of nine guns.[9]

Administration :

With the accession of Pratap Chandra, a new chapter opened in the history of Mayurbhanj. He proved to be a worthy son of a worthy father and like his predecessors continued to lead Mayurbhanj on the path of progress and prosperity. In recognition of his talent, the great historian, Dr. K.C.Panigrahi has written that the tempo of cultural and administrative reforms started by Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo was maintained by his son Pratap Chandra.[10] Pratap Chandra was an administrator par-excellence. He gave to the people of Mayurbhanj an honest, clean, efficient and incorruptible administration. Among the legacies he left behind, his sound administration is still remembered by those few surviving persons who lived under his rule. Pratap Chandra built on the foundation laid by his brother Purna Chandra and father Sriram Chandra and built an administrative system which worked for the welfare of the people and which was admired by some of the top administrative officers of the Government of Orissa who came to Mayurbhanj after the merger.[11]

Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo had become a victim of criticism that he was appointing too many non-Oriya officers, especially Bengalis, in the State administration ignoring the claim and interest of the Oriyas. Journals like "Sambalpur Hitaishini" in its edition dated 15 February 1908, and "Utkal Darpan" in its edition dated 1 December 1906, had complained that Maharaja was favouring non-Oriyas while appointing top officials of the State.[12] Similar allegations were also made against Maharaja Pratap Chandra. All important posts in the State were held by Bengalis, which caused great heart burning among the Oriyas. It is true that the Dewan, the State Judge, the Secretary, Assistant State Judge, the State Archaeologist, the State Engineer and the Chief Medical Officer were all non-Oriyas at the time Maharaja ascended the throne in 1928. It was also rumoured that the Maharaja was enamoured of Bengali Officers because of his Calcutta connections. Even Mahatab is said to have told Maharaja in a meeting at Nilgiri, " Maharaja Saheb you are Bengalising your State."[13] But there were many Oriya Officers who held important posts in his administration. Some of the Oriya Officers appointed by Pratap Chandra in the State service who later acquired name and fame after merger were Shyam Chandra Tripathy, Paramananda Acharya, Gokul Chandra Satpathy, Suresh Chandra Mishra, Radha Govind Das, Basant Kumar Satpathy, Ram Chandra Dash and Braja Sundar Dash. It will not be correct to say that the interest of the Oriyas were ignored and overlooked by the Maharaja while choosing his civil servants.

It had been the tradition of Mayurbhanj State since the time of Sriram Chandra to appoint some of the best administrators as the Dewan. After the death of Sriram Chandra in 1912, no Indian was appointed as Dewan till the accession of his grandson Pratap Chandra. E.Mc.Leod Smith was the last English Dewan who held this post from 7 January 1922 to 28 November 1929, when he reverted to government service and proceeded to Angul to join his new appointment as Deputy Commissioner. After his departure, Maharaja himself held charge of the departments previously under the Dewan with the assistance of Secretary Mr P. M. Mukherjee, Assistant State Judge Mr. S. N. Mukherjee and State Judge Rai Bahadur Hari Das.[14] The first Indian Dewan to be appointed under Pratap Chandra was Dr. P. K. Sen, M.A. (Cantab), LL.D., Barrister at Law, who held the post from 19 June 1930.[15] With his vast legal experience Dr P. K. Sen acted as the Chief Judge of the newly set up High Court in 1933. In April 1933 he was deputed to England to appear as witness on behalf of the Indian Chamber of Princes and give evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms.[16]

Dr. Sen relinquished his office on the 17 June 1935 and Mr Khitish Chandra Neogy, MA, BL, advocate Calcutta High Court and ex-member of the Indian Legislative Assembly, took over charge as the Dewan of the State on 6 July 1935. After his departure in 1940 he was appointed as the Political Adviser of the State for two years.[17] Even after 1942 Maharaja maintained touch with Mr. Neogy and it is generally believed that all the

important legislation of the State were drafted by him and Maharaja consulted him on important political issues concerning the State.[18] The last Dewan to be appointed by Pratap Chandra was Major B. P. Pande, B. A., LL.B. F.R.E.S. (London). He took over charge on 16 August 1940. Mr. Pande was a man of Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh. After getting the Law Degree from Allahabad he had joined the Bareilly Bar and had worked in England as junior to Sir John Simon in 1927 in the famous Lakshmanraj case. He had also attended the Third Round Table Conference in 1933 as one of the representatives of the Indian Princely States.[19]

Soon after his accession Pratap Chandra devoted his energy in modernising the State. Electricity and Telephone are two important requisites for a well administered state. The entire area of Baripada Municipality was brought under the electric supply scheme from 15 March 1929, and streetlights were provided. Electricity was supplied to 73 State offices and 50 private buildings. Similarly from June 1929 Telephone became operative in Baripada town.[20] To apprise the people about the activities of the State, the Mayurbhanj Administrative Report was published annually since the time of Sriram Chandra. Pratap Chandra introduced the publication of Mayurbhanj State Gazette, which was a bilingual fortnightly from its commencement year of 1936. The Oriya edition of the Gazette was named as "Bhanja Pradeepa".[21] Before this Gazette saw the light of the day,there was no regular official organ for giving publicity to the legislative orders, circulars and notifications. The Administration has a responsibility towards the people to

keep them informed of the new laws and regulations promulgated by it. Right to information is a valuable right which must be granted to the people in a State which takes pride for good administration. The Gazette fulfilled this function of keeping the people informed about all that was happening in the State. The Regulations and Orders issued under the authority of the Maharaja or by the Dewan and the heads of departments, miscellaneous notices, advertisements, orders relating to appointment, leave and transfer of gazetted officers and other information like weather, crop reports, statement of death and epidemic were published in the Gazette, which gave a complete picture of the activities of the State.[22]

Secretariat :

With the coming of Neogy as the Dewan of the State many administrative changes were introduced, the most important of which was the creation of the State Secretariat. Under the previous arrangement, the Dewan was directly concerned with the control of certain departments, while the Maharaja kept some other departments under his administrative control. In other important Princely States the Dewan was in control of all the departments of the State. The creation of the Secretariat was a decision in the right line and a notification was issued in the State Gazette to the effect that from 1 April 1936, the Maharaja's office and the Dewan's office would be amalgamated to form the Mayurbhanj State Secretariat which would work under the supervision and control of the Dewan. The formation of the State Secretariat unified the administration and put the Dewan in controlling charge

of all the departments. The post of Chief Revenue Officer was created with effect from 1 April 1936, and this officer was to look after the function of the departments of revenue, settlement, income tax, excise and *zamindaris*, etc.[23]

To streamline the Budget procedure and to update it and make it comparable to the Budget procedure followed in British India, an experienced retired officer of the Indian Audit and Accounts Service, Mr P. N. Mukherjee, was appointed as Officer on Special Duty to assist in the overhauling of the financial rules and procedure. The Manual of Budget Procedure framed by Mr. Mukherjee came into force from 1 December 1936. Henceforth the responsibility for the preparation of the annual statement of the estimated revenue and expenditure of the State rested with the Finance Department of the Secretariat instead of with the office of the Examiner of Accounts as had been the practice before. Thus for the first time in the State similar procedure was followed for the preparation of the Budget as then prevailing in British India. The preparation of the Budget Manual and adoption of the Budget procedure along British Indian lines was a milestone in Mayurbhanj administration.[24]

Census :

In 1931, Pratap Chandra had appointed Mohammed Laeequddin as the Census Officer for the purpose of commencing Census operation in the State. After painstakingly doing his job for five years, Laeequddin

submitted his report, which was published as the Census Report of Mayurbhanj in 1935. The report was in two volumes; the first volume covered four hundred and forty two pages whereas the second volume ran to a length of six hundred and eight printed pages. The Census Report was the first of its kind in the State and besides giving data about the population, it incorporated a vast amount of material relating to the history of the Bhanja dynasty, the physical features of the State, its mountains and river systems, climatic conditions, flora and fauna, mineral resources, forest wealth, tribal life, its festivals, emigration and immigration, manners and customs of the people, cultural life, etc. [25]

Maharaja used to keep all information about the working of his officers in order to keep strict control over them. His officers were not only efficient but also honest to the core. Generally the news about the functioning of the various departments and their officers reached him during his midnight *darbars*, which was attended by a large number of people.[26] He also assumed the charge of a department when the head of the department went on leave. During such period he came in contact with the records which helped him in forming an opinion about the efficiency or inefficiency of his officers. Many a time he would go to a village in a jeep and ask the villagers to bring a cot for him. He would sit on the cot like an ordinary man and enquire from the villagers about their problems and also about the manner in which the State officials were dealing with them.[27] To root out corruption in the bureaucracy he promulgated an Order on 15 November 1938, prohibiting acceptance of

illegal gratification by State servants. In case of such illegal receipts, the Order provided for summary dismissal of the State servants. Any body could lodge a protest of such case of bribery to the local officer or to the Dewan either verbally or in writing. [28]

There are many persons to attest that Pratap Chandra had a keen eye and always appointed the best man for the job. He spotted the fittest person and utilised his services for the interest of the State. He appointed as the head of the Archaeological Department, Mr. Paramananda Acharya who later earned the name and fame as one of the greatest archaeologist of India. He chose Suresh Chandra Mishra as the Manager of the State Bank of Mayurbhanj who proved to be a competent banker. He appointed Ram Prasad Sharma, an honest and upright businessman, as the importer of textiles for Mayurbhanj.[29] But no appointment made by Pratap Chandra could have brought greater glory to Mayurbhanj than the selection of Braja Sundar Dash as the games teacher in the Baripada High English School in 1931. Braja Sundar Dash was a great footballer and had played with credit in the IFA Shield for the Aryan Club for several years. He was called "Dangerous left-out B.Dash" by the Calcuttans.[30] Braja Babu transformed Mayurbhanj sports atmosphere and put Mayurbhanj as the brightest star in the sports-sky of Orissa. He trained the players of Baripada and built a formidable football team which proved to be the best not only in Orissa but also in some of the neighbouring areas of Bihar and Bengal as well. The Baripada Town Club won many trophies not only in Orissa but also

in tournaments outside the province.[31] The athletes trained by him became champions in athletic meets held in Orissa, Bihar and Bengal. [32]

Personal Involvement in Administration :

One significant thing about the administration of Pratap Chandra was that he was keen to associate himself with the working of each department. His personal supervision of the work kept the officer always on his toes and never allowed him to be negligent or corrupt. Whenever any officer of the State went on leave, the Maharaja presented himself in the office punctually at 10 a.m., worked as the officer-in-charge of the department and made all the orders in the file. If the State Engineer went on leave, the Maharaja could be found on the chair of the Engineer, passing necessary orders or he could be found at the construction sites if some work was going on.[33] A gentleman of Baripada proceeding in a car to Balasore in the year 1944 found the Maharaja sitting by the side of the road near Nangalkata, ten kilometres from Baripada, where the road was being repaired.[34] Similarly, when the Civil Supplies Officer went on leave Maharaja attended the office of the CSO and worked till 5 p.m. On such occasions he had to consider the applications of the public for the issue of permits which would enable them to purchase cloth in the market. He would call each applicant to his presence, carefully weigh his needs, and issue permits according to the available stock of cloth.[35] Few rulers in India have shown such magnanimity and such a keen desire to keep the people happy and contented by personally looking

into their problems. His administration did not make any distinction between an ordinary citizen and members of the royal family including Her Highness, the Maharani. During the period of cloth rationing even the Maharani had to apply for a permit to the CSO for the cloth required by her servants. There is an interesting incident when the Maharaja sitting at the CSO office had to consider the application of the Maharani. He treated her like an ordinary applicant and issued a permit after slashing her requirement to half. [36]

Praja Sabhas and Kendra Parishad :

The greatest contribution of Maharaja Pratap Chandra was the introduction of democratic principles and the involvement of people through *Praja Sabhas* in the administration of the State. To bring the people of Mayurbhanj into closer touch with the administration, the Praja Sabha Order was issued on 23 November 1938. By this Order he established five *Praja Sabhas* (Committees of the people), one for each of the four subdivisions and the fifth for the town of Baripada. The *Praja Sabha* was constituted by nominated and elected members. These *Sabhas* were deliberative bodies who had been given the power to discuss the people's problems and give their recommendation to the State authorities for their (problems) solution. Those recommendations were generally accepted and implemented by the State. The *Praja Sabha* did a good job by acting as a link between the Ruler and the ruled.[37] Pressurised by the *Praja Mandal* Party, another constitutional concession was granted by the Maharaja when he announced, on the occasion of his 44th birthday, which fell on 14 March 1945, the establishment of

Mayurbhanj *Kendra Parishad* (Central Legislature). The *Kendra Parishad* had the right to make laws for all persons, for all courts and for all places and things within Mayurbhanj State and for the subjects of Maharaja. However it could not legislate on matters relating to the royal family, relation of the State with paramount power or other Princely States or relating to existing *Sanads* and agreements.[38] This was another step in involving the people of Mayurbhanj directly in the legislative field. The Kendra Parishad Order was cancelled with effect from 9 December 1947.

State Bank :

To give stimulus to the growth of industries and commerce in the State, the Maharaja set up the Mayurbhanj State Bank, which was inaugurated on 2 May 1938 in the presence of a large assemblage of officials and public. An extraordinary issue of the State Gazette dated 1 May 1938 announced the rules and regulation relating to the constitution of the State Bank. These rules declared the Bank to be a department of the State under the general control and direction of the State authorities. A special feature of the Bank was that it could not go into liquidation save by the order of the Maharaja. In the event of liquidation lawful claims of creditors and depositors would be met in full by the State. A branch of the Bank was opened at Rairangpur on 25 July 1938. For the healthy growth of trade and commerce and in providing financial facilities to various business sectors, the State Bank played an important role till it was merged with the State Bank of India during the fifties. [39]

Archaeology :

Pratap Chandra showed keen interest, soon after his accession, in carrying on the archaeological work, which had been undertaken but remained unfinished during the reign of his brother. The first archaeological work to which royal approval was given was the excavation work at Haripurgarh, which served as the capital of Mayurbhanj from 1400 to 1800 A.D. The destruction of Khijjinaga Kotta in 1360–61 A.D. by Feroz Shah Tughlaq had forced Harihar Bhanja to shift his capital from Khiching to Hariharpur in 1400 A.D. Hariharpur became a place of historical importance as, according to Gaudiya Vaishnavite literature, Shri Chaitanya Dev passed through Hariharpur while on his way to Puri. It was here that Nemai Shri Chaitanya chanted the name of Hari in ecstasy and while dancing became unconscious and fell on the ground.[40] In 1929 the State Government decided to take up the work of excavation at Haripurgarh and Sailendra Prasad Bose alias Birbal Babu was entrusted with the task. By the sincere effort of Mr. Bose the ancient monuments of Hariharpur were excavated. Birbal Babu also conducted trial excavations at the adjacent villages of Baidpur, Jadipal, Khanua and Dukura etc where several stone tools belonging to the Neolithic period were discovered.[41]

Khiching had served as the capital of Mayurbhanj from the earliest time till it was shifted to Hariharpur. Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo evinced great interest in reviving the ancient glory of the Bhanja dynasty, which lay buried under the earth. Mr S. P. Bose had been transferred and

posted to Khiching as the Curator of the Museum since April 1935. Pratap Chandra entrusted him with the task of building a new temple at Khiching, which was completed by 1941, and the deity was installed on 14 March 1942.[42] The *Pratistha* ceremony of the great temple at Khiching,built at a cost of the Rs. 80,000, was performed in accordance with the orthodox Hindu rituals on 11 March 1942. The ceremony was attended by the Maharaja and Maharani, all members of the royal family and several ruling Princes of Orissa.[43] The Archaeological Department of Mayurbhanj manned by such great personalities as S.P. Bose and Parmananda Acharya was greatly activated by Pratap Chandra and important archaeological discoveries were made during his reign. It cannot be gainsaid what Khiching is today was the work of Pratap Chandra.

Education :

The Bhanja rulers were great patron of education. Maharaja Krushna Chandra Bhanja Deo was known for his liberality, the most prominent instance of which was his donation of Rs.27,000 for the purpose of raising the Cuttack High School to the status of a college, named after T.E. Ravenshaw, as the Ravenshaw College. Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo is also known for his donation to the Medical College at Cuttack.[44] English education was first introduced in Mayurbhanj during the reign of Maharaja Krushna Chandra Bhanja Deo (1867-82), who started one M.E. School at Baripada. In1889, the M.E School was upgraded to a High School which become full fledged in 1892. The institution was known as the Mayurbhanj Raj High

English School and was subsequently called the Baripada High English School.[45] Besides this High English School at Baripada,there were four other schools which provided education upto M.E. standard during the first decade of the twentieth century.[46]

The conservative society of India did not appreciate or encourage female education and there was no separate school for girls in Mayurbhanj till 1861. One Lower Primary School for girls was started at Baripada in 1862 and after more than half a century it was upgraded to an Upper Primary School in 1919. Pratap Chandra upgraded it to a M.E School in 1932 and it remained as such till the close of his reign.[47] During the rule of Pratap Chandra the importance of primary education was fully recognised and every attempt was made to make such education universal. With a view to achieve this end and to make the primary education cheap, payment of school fees in the primary school was completely abolished during the decade beginning 1940. The administration of Pratap Chandra followed a steady policy of opening new schools every where in the backward areas. Local enterprise in opening up primary and middle schools where encouraged and suitable stipends and aids were given by the State for it maintenance.[48]

Pratap Chandra was conscious of the illiteracy and ignorance prevailing among the tribals and backward classes of the State. Delivering his address in the prize distribution ceremony of Baripada High School in 1938, he said, "No one would be more pleased than I, if the backward people will come forward in large numbers to take advantage of educational facility provided by the State". In his speech he also advised the tribals to equip

themselves to come in par with the non-tribals by getting proper education.[49] For the Baripada High School Pratap Chandra sanctioned funds for the construction of a new hostel to provide accommodation for hundred students. A free hostel, attached to the High School, was also opened for the poor boys, where the whole expenditure was borne by the Government.[50]

Pratap Chandra's views towards higher education has always been apathetic. He always believed that education must be more result oriented and productive. He visualised the purpose of education as not to produce white clad babus but creating down-to-earth people, self reliant units of the society, capable of earning their own bread. Reflecting his views the Dewan of Mayurbhanj Mr P. K. Sen wrote, "Higher education, however important it may be elsewhere is not a pressing problem in Mayurbhanj".[51] He further wrote in his report of 1934 – 35 "A well grounded knowledge of the three Rs, together with a knowledge of some productive industry, art or occupation, such as will make them self-reliant striving units of society is what your subjects require for their prosperity and happiness".[52] Maharaja had always envisaged education not merely as a theoretical knowledge but as a practical wisdom which helps a person to earn his livelihood. This view was not totally devoid of rationality at a time when a large section of the people of the State could not afford two square meals a day. To such impoverished and downtrodden people theoretical knowledge could not have carried any meaning. Summing up the views of the Maharaja, the Dewan in his report wrote, "To bring up a class of young men whose intellectual

equipment cannot be other than that of matriculates at the highest but who consider it beneath their dignity to make a living of any sort by manual labour, is bound to be disastrous in the long run to them and to society. To obviate such a catastrophe, the schools have sooner or later to be recast so as to be able to give the younger generation a suitable training ground for intelligent bread winning occupations".[53]

Maharaja's negative approach towards higher education also found an echo in the speech delivered by him in the Senate of the newly constituted Utkal University in the year 1944. In the first meeting of the Senate of the Utkal University held on May 12-13, 1944, in the Orissa Legislative Assembly Hall, Cuttack, the Maharaja as the Pro-Chancellor delivered an address of welcome to the first fellows of the University.[54] In his Presidential speech the Maharaja said,

> "Modern Universities have produced great and distinguished men but, on the other hand, it is found that very often people come out of the University as the products come out of the factory. I do not claim to be an expert on University education. Therefore keeping in view the dangers and pitfalls which are inherent in University education, we must make our educational policy more result oriented".[55]

It is evident that Maharaja always viewed education as a process through which one learns to earn his bread and thus makes himself self-

reliant. He overlooked the educative value of education by which a man develops his personality and by making himself free from ignorance, superstition and darkness,understands the world better. He thought in terms of the extra responsibility that will be on his head in providing employment to higher educated persons that institutions of higher learning will produce in his State from year to year. Beyond a certain stage, the small State of Mayurbhanj cannot give employment to the highly educated persons, and these persons are likely to create problems for the State. To say the least, Maharaja's thinking was narrow, selfish and anti-people. It was the view of an obscurantist feudal lord rather than that of an enlightened Ruler who belonged to a Ruling House whose contributions fuelled the lamp of education and kept it burning at Cuttack. That is why all entreaties and requests of the leading citizens of Baripada and *Praja Mandal* workers, for setting up of a college at Baripada, was time and again, turned down by the Maharaja unceremoniously. To add insult to injury, he is reported to have replied to such request in words which are unbecoming of a great Ruler. "Do you want me to produce monkeys by such college."[56] Viewed in the background of the democratic, progressive administration of the State, the wide outlook, the depth of vision and foresight of the successive Bhanja rulers from Krushna Chandra onwards, we fail to understand Pratap Chandra's narrow obscurantist approach towards educational progress in the State. His refusal to patronise education in his own State, while making large donations for educational development beyond the frontier of the State, was one serious drawback among his many admirable qualities.

In March 1944, the Maharaja made an annual endowment of a gold medal to be known as 'Mayurbhanj Medal' to be awarded to the best graduate of Utkal University. At the first convocation held on 2 November 1944, the Mayurbhanj medal was awarded to Mr. Srinivas Mishra the best graduate of the University.[57] The Government of the Maharaja placed the services of Mr. G.C. Satpathy, Superintendent of Education of Mayurbhanj State, at the disposal of the Utkal University for a period of five years for appointment as Registrar in the University. Mr. Satpathy joined his post on 1 December 1944.[58] Mr. S.D. Bahuguna, Director of Education and Rural Reconstruction, Mayurbhanj State, was nominated as the representative of the State on the first Senate of the Utkal University. Maharaja contributed a sum of 8 lakhs to the University.[59] Maharaja also donated the Mayurbhanj State Press to the University.[60]

To perpetuate the revered memory of his father who was deeply interested in Sanskrit literature and philosophy, the Maharaja made an annual endowment of Rs. 18,000 to the Benaras Hindu University for the purpose of establishing a Chair to be called Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo Chair of Sanskrit Learning and languages and fellowships attached thereto. The main function of the Professor and fellows would be to conduct researches in Sanskrit language and literature, the result of which would be embodied in lectures of the University and in a series of publication to be entitled "Mayurbhanj Sanskrit Series", an annual report of which was to be presented to the Maharaja. The Hindu University gratefully accepted the offer and Dr.

S. Mukherjee, Financial Advisor of the Mayurbhanj State,was appointed to hold the Chair with effect from 1 July 1941.[61]

Great importance, however, was given by the Maharaja to vocational education and for that purpose he established the Purna Chandra Industrial Institute near the railway station. It was set up on 16 July 1931, with a donation of Rupees 1 lakh from Junior Dowager Maharani Sahiba Takat Kumari and was dedicated to the memory of late Purna Chandra Bhanja Deo. The institution imparted training in weaving, dying, calico printing, bleaching and also provided a course in carpentry and furniture making.[62] The Maharaja invariably wore a *dhoti* made of fine textile, with a red border about 3 cm. wide, which was specially made for him in this Institute.[63] The Mayurbhanj Commercial Institute was started in the year 1939. It provided instruction in commercial courses such as typewriting, bookkeeping, etc. The Maharaja also popularised the scout-education in Mayurbhanj. The Boy Scout organisation worked with credit during flood, famine and other natural calamities. In 1938 the Boy Scouts of Mayurbhanj attended the Governor's Rally at Cuttack and the Kanika Shield for scouting was awarded to them for being adjudged the best scouts in Orissa. Shri Sarat Chandra Bindhani, a boy scout of the Baripada High School was selected to participate in the World Jamboree of Boy Scouts held in France in 1947.[64] With a view to wipe out illiteracy in the State, a literacy campaign was launched in 1938 under which several night schools were opened in various parts of the State. Maharaja granted a large number of scholarships to deserving candidates in

general and technical streams. Meritorious students were sent outside the State for training in technical and vocational subjects such as Mining, Engineering etc.[65]

Judiciary :

Pratap Chandra was very keen to provide an efficient and impartial judiciary to his people. He never interfered in the function of the courts and maintained their dignity and impartiality. There had been occasions when his favourite subjects and personal friends had approached him to secure his help in getting favourable orders from the court in any pending case. But he had never obliged anybody by doing any such things. Many people had also approached him to solve their civil disputes. He always used to reply, "Go to the courts, what have I established the courts for, if I am to give the judgement in your disputes."[66]

Mayurbhanj Judiciary was known for its independence during the rule of Pratap Chandra. The Magistrates and the Judges acted without fear or favour and gave their judgements according to their conscience. Pratap Chandra was a keen judge of men, and he saw to it that the best available talents were appointed in the Judiciary. In several civil and criminal cases the members of the royal family were involved as parties and so impartial were the Judges that in many a case the verdict went against them. *Routrai* Saheb Sreedam Chandra Bhanja Deo, the younger son of Krushna Chandra and the brother of Sriram Chandra, carried on money lending business. He

often had to rush to the court to realise the loan amount from the defaulting loanees. There are instances when *Routrai* Saheb requested the Maharaja to exercise his influence in cases pending in courts in his favour but the Maharaja never kept his uncle's request.

The State had civil and criminal courts and all appeals against the order of all courts was heard by a Judicial Committee which consisted of the Ruling Chief and the Dewan or any other member of the State Council whom the Chief may nominate. The Judicial Committee was the highest appellate court in the State. The State Judge had the overall charge of the judicial side of the administration and under him were all the Magistrates, Munsifs and Sub-Judges and the Subdivisional officers.[67]

When P.K.Sen came as the Dewan to Mayurbhanj, important administrative reforms were introduced. The Judicial Committee was presided over by the Ruler and this gave the people of Mayurbhanj a sense of security and satisfaction, the importance of which it is difficult to overestimate. While it was desired that this confidence should remain unimpaired, it was at the same time found necessary for many other important reasons that the head of the Government should be free from actual participation in the administration of justice. In order to divest himself completely of all judicial functions, the High Court was established which functioned as the highest appellate court of the State.[68]

A High Court was established by the Maharaja by Order, dated the 10 April 1933, with Dewan as Chief Judge, and two other Puisne Judges, being the Special Judicial Officer and the State Judge. This Order abolished the Judicial Committee and the newly constituted High Court became the apex Court for hearing all appeals and revisional matters.[69] Special masons and Chinese carpenters were brought from Calcutta and were employed in the construction of High Court building within the old court premises.[70] The High Court began to function in this magnificent building, the like of which can hardly be found in any district of the present State of Orissa. It was, however, by an Order dated the 4 January 1936, that the powers and functions of the High Court were clearly defined and the minimum qualification of the Judges of the High Court were laid down and brought in line with the standard then prevailing in the Indian provinces. Under the Order dated the 4 January 1936, the powers of all the Judges of the High Court, including the Chief Judge, regarding all judicial matters,were brought on par and provision was made for the appointment of three Puisne Judges instead of two.[71] Dr. P. K. Sen was the first Chief Judge of the Mayurbhanj High Court. Experienced, retired District and Sessions Judges of British Indian provinces were invited to hold the post of Judge in the Mayurbhanj High Court. Their vast experience, accumulated over years of judicial work, their fearless character and their impartiality raised Mayurbhanj Judiciary to a level not attained in any other Princely State in Orissa.[72] The inauguration of 'Mayurbhanj Law Reporter' a quarterly law journal was an important feature in the administration of the Judicial Department. The Report fulfilled the object of co-ordinating the

administration of justice on the lines laid down by the High Court and of affording guidance not only to the Judiciary and the Magistracy but also to the State Bar and the police.[73]

An example of the independence of Mayurbhanj Judiciary can be seen in the prosecution and trial of Jagannath Kamila in the Court of Mr. R.N. Mohanty, Magistrate, First Class, Baripada for an offence of outraging the modesty of a women under section 354 IPC. Jagannath Kamila was an active member of the *Praja Mandal* Party, which was creating many problems for the Maharaja. While Mr. Kamila was singing the National Song in the *Shivaratri* fair at Simla he was arrested by the Bangriposi police on a trumped up charge and a criminal case was instituted against him. Mr. Mohanty acquitted Kamila of all the charges and pronounced his judgement in the morning hours during the summer. The Magistrate was to go on leave on that very day to his native place. The Dewan was so much irritated by the release of Mr. Kamila that the Magistrate's leave was cancelled and notice of cancellation was served on him while he was making preparation to go to the railway station. Mr. R. N. Mohanty was totally upset and went straight to the Maharaja. On seeing him and before he could say anything the Maharaja said, "I know why you have come. You can avail the leave and go to your village". Maharaja was facing a lot of inconvenience by the *Praja Mandal* agitation, yet he endorsed the verdict of Mr Mohanty in acquitting Mr Kamila.[74]

Agriculture :

Agriculture was the main occupation of about 90% of the people of Mayurbhanj and Pratap Chandra rightly considered the peasants as the backbone of the society. A Department of Agriculture had already been opened. An ideal agricultural farm had been set up at Samakhunta, three kilometers from Baripada, on the Baripada-Baldiha road and stipendary students were sent to Samakhunta to learn about production of different crops. Agricultural exhibitions were held in the town every year from 1936 to give encouragement to the agriculturists.[75] To assure the peasants of their rights over their agricultural holdings and to make the collection of land revenue in a fair and equitable manner, a Settlement Department had been set up in the State. Settlement operations were based on the principles that land should be assessed in accordance with its potentialities. Land was divided into three classes. A light tax was imposed on those land holders who enjoyed the facilities of irrigation from the major irrigation projects. Enhancement of land revenue at re-settlement was done but such enhancement was always moderate. The revenue system of the State also recognised the necessity of special arrangements for relaxation in realisation of land revenue when there was a serious failure of crops.[76]

The State opened *Hamaras* or *grain golas* in important villages to supply seeds to the villagers at nominal price.[77] A Loan Department under the Revenue Administration had been opened to provide loan for agricultural operation and land improvement. Co-operative credit societies were formed

which also provided finance to the agriculturist in times of need.[78] Two Marketing Officers were appointed for conducting a marketing survey of the agricultural produce of the State in June 1936. The senior Marketing Officer Mr. A.J.Basu toured extensively throughout the State and submitted an interim report on the marketing survey of the Bamanghati subdivision towards the close of the year 1936.[79] The most important legislation for the protection of the agriculturist from the clutches of the unscrupulous moneylenders, who often auctioned their lands for non-payment of debts, was passed in 1938.

The Agriculturist Debt Relief Order (Supplementary) 1938 was promulgated on 19 September 1938. The Debt Relief Order was made with a view to protect the agriculturist from becoming landless. In case of sale by the Civil and Revenue Courts of the land of an agriculturist the State exercised the right of option to purchase it in preference to other bidders. The land so purchased by the State was given back to the debtor to cultivate as a *Sanja* tenant (division of crop) under the State. Thus the moneylender got his money and yet the debtor agriculturist did not lose his land. He was only reduced to a *Sanja* tenant and cultivated it as before. He had the right to regain the ownership of the land by paying to the State,within five years,the full amount of the purchase money. This was an extremely beneficial legislation for the poor agriculturist who got a chance to regain the land lost by court auction on non-payment of debt.[80]

During the War period Grow More Food and Self Sufficiency Campaign had been launched in the State. This campaign had made

appreciable progress by the extensive propaganda carried on by all touring officers particularly of the Revenue Department who instructed the people how to increase the productivity of their land. *Taccavi* loans, in cash and paddy, were advanced to the cultivators by the Revenue Department as aid to agriculture. Government land in schools, inspection bungalow compounds and land adjoining railway lines were allowed to be cultivated for increasing production. These measures paid good dividend and led to increased production.[81] Provision for tapping new sources of water supply for irrigation purposes also received due attention from the Government. Provision for greater irrigation facilities as an immediate necessity to the Grow More Food Campaign was realised. Consequently, an irrigation section in the Public Works Department, under the control of Chief Engineer, was constituted and an Irrigation Committee consisting of important officials was set up to look into the State's irrigation problems. The Haldia *bundh* one of the three big reservoirs of the State was reconditioned and extended with a view to bring more land under irrigation.[82]

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Revenue :

The Revenue Administration of the State was controlled by a gradation of officers with the Chief Revenue Officer at the head. The three Subdivisional Officers of Bamanghati, Kaptipada and Panchpir and the Land Revenue Officer of the Sadar subdivision was responsible to the State through the Chief Revenue Officer in matters of revenue administration. There was also a Settlement Officer in charge of Settlement Department and an Income

Tax Officer and Excise Deputy Collector under the CRO. The land revenue was collected by the *Pradhan* or the headman in the village who was responsible for its payment in proper time to the *Pargana Sardar* who in turn was responsible to the State for payment of revenue of his *pargana*.The *Pradhan* and the *Sardar* received some commission for collection of revenue. In *pirs* and *parganas*, which were not under the *Sardari* system collection was made by the *Tahasildar* and *Naib Tahasildar*. In 1941-42 there were 17 *Sardars* and 11 *Tahasildar* in the State.[83]

Aviation :

Besides being an able pilot himself, Pratap Chandra was interested in opening a new department of State which would look after the State aeroplanes and all matters relating to flying. He was contemplating for some time to create an Aviation Department and it came into existence in 1936. The Public Works Department of the State had prepared an aerodrome at Rajabasa, which was 7 miles from Baripada. Mr. R. P. Dargalkar was appointed as Air Pilot with effect from 1 June 1936, and Mr. K. M. Mukherjee took up the charge of Ground Engineer from January 1937. Two aeroplanes were purchased during the year.[84] Two more aircrafts were purchased during the next year and were named Vega Gull and Leopard Moth.[85] During the War period Maharaja gifted some of his aeroplanes to the Viceroy.[86] The services of Mr.Dargalkar were requisitioned by the Government of India and he left the State service during 1942-43.

Mining & Geology :

Mayurbhanj was rich in mineral resources. A geological survey of the State was conducted in the year 1903 but could not be completed due to certain reasons. The survey indicated that the deposits of iron ores were enormous and in some of the areas of almost unrivalled purity. Negotiations were opened for leasing out the iron ore areas and in 1910 Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo granted mining lease of iron ores in Gorumahisani, Badampahar and Suleipat, covering an area of 12 sq. miles, to the Tata Iron and Steel Co. In the negotiation with the Tata Company, Mr. Pramath Nath Bose played a very important part. The lease granted during 1910 was renewed for a period of 30 years by Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo from 1 July, 1940. Mining in the Gorumahisani iron ore deposit commenced from 1910 and in Badampahar from 1919 and Suleipat commenced production from 1921.[87] A regular Department of Mining and Geology was started in December 1936 for ensuring systematic inspection of mines as well as for conducting a geological survey of the State. As a result of the survey considerable deposits of Vanadium was brought to light in the Bamanghati subdivision.[88] To regularise and control the procedure for the granting of mining leases the Mayurbhanj State Mining Order was issued on 14 November 1936. The Order provided for inspection of mines, control of mining operation, fixing maximum hours of work, safeguard against accidents and ensuring medical help in case of accidents.[89]

Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo was conscious of the developing medical science and was keen to provide modern medical facilities to his

subjects. The King Edward Dispensary at Baripada was functioning since 3 June 1915. He constructed a new *Zenana* Hospital attached to the new King Edward VII Charitable Dispensary at Baripada which was opened on 6 September 1938, by the Junior Dowager Maharani in the presence of a large number of ladies of the town. Built at a cost of Rs.70,000, it was constructed in the latest up-to-date style and provided fifty-two beds including four cabins for the women patients. With a view to promote *Ayurvedic* system of medicine in the State and make it more result oriented, the control of the *Ayurvedic* dispensary at Baripada was transferred to the Education Department and the dispensary came to be housed in a *pucca* building in the compound of the Sanskrit *Tol.* The Chief *Ayurved* appointed in this dispensary was *Kabiraj* Gadadhar Kar.[90] A Tuberculosis ward was opened during the time of Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo.[91] He also installed an X-ray machine in the hospital.

War Efforts :

The Second World War came with a bang on 1 September 1939. It was an unique event in the history of the mankind because of the various sectors of war spread over different continents, the extensive damage caused to men and property in the belligerent countries and the huge amount of money spent in carrying on the war. It affected not only the countries and the people where the war was waged but also other people throughout the world. To carry on this war in the European sector the British Government needed the active co-operation of the people of the colonies including India. The Indian Government made substantial contribution in men and money to

the war efforts of the Allied powers. The Princely States of India also made huge contribution towards the war.

For the intensification of the war efforts of Mayurbhanj, the Mayurbhanj Central War Efforts Committee, with the Maharaja as the President and the Dewan as the Vice-President and consisting of forty-one members representing various classes and interests in the State, was inaugurated in September 1940. The Central Committee, later on, elected a small 'Executive Committee', with the Dewan as the President, for co-ordinating and controlling various war efforts all over the State. Four Subdivisional Committees, one in each subdivision of the State, were also formed to conduct war works in the interiors. A War Council consisting of some principal officers of the State was constituted when the war touched the frontiers of India at Manipur. The function of the Council was advisory and it advised the Maharaja on important problems arising out of the war e.g. food problem, internal security and other kindred matters.[92]

By 1943-44 a sum of Rs. 13,60,318-3-0 had already been contributed towards the war fund. During 1943-44 also, a further sum of Rs.3,72,155 was donated by the Maharaja and the Executive Committee. Realising the importance of Air Power in modern warfare, the Maharaja generously placed his three aircrafts Dragonfly, Vegagull, and the Beechcraft, approximately costing Rs. 2,61,000/-, at the disposal of H.E. the Viceroy. Free timber at concessional rate for defence and other works were also supplied.[93] An order was passed by the Government of the Maharaja of

Mayurbhanj giving special educational facilities to the children of those serving in the war and other facilities were also extended to their families during their absence. The families of those serving in the army were well protected and any harassment caused to the family members and dependants were duly enquired by the Dewan through the police and appropriate relief was given. Officers of the R.A.F. were invited and entertained at the annual *Chhau* dance at the Palace by the Maharaja and the top Air Force Officers were entertained at the Maharaja's guest house and also by the Dewan from time to time.[94] Football and cricket matches were also arranged for the entertainment of army officers who played these matches against the Town Club of Baripada. Europeans, New Zealanders and Canadian Officers were entertained at the *Vishram Bhawan* by the Dewan.[95]

Maharaja placed his houses at Calcutta, Chandipur, Cuttack and Puri for use by the military. The State also placed its rest houses, P.W.D. houses and inspection bungalows within the State for use by the Defence Services, free of cost.[96] The victories of the Allies in various sectors of the war was duly celebrated by meetings presided by the Dewan in Baripada. 10 September 1943, was declared as a special holiday on account of surrender of Italy. All other victories of the Allies in the battlefield were celebrated throughout the State as a day of rejoicing and festivity.[97]

Because of Maharaja's contribution to the war efforts of the Allies, H. E. the Viceroy invited him to the National Defence Council as a representative of the Indian States and His Majesty, the King Emperor, conferred on the Maharaja the honorary rank of Flight Lieutenant in the R.A.F.,

for his personal services in helping the cause of the Allies.[98] By the end of the year 1944-45 the contribution of Mayurbhanj to various war funds rose to the peak figure of Rs.24,20,169-8-4.[99] In appreciation of the Maharaja's contribution towards the war efforts, His Excellency, the Governor-General of India, Lord Wavell wrote a personal letter to the Maharaja on 12 April 1944, expressing his gratitude towards the Maharaja for his gifts.[100]

Sports & Culture :

Maharaja was a great lover of sports and was himself a great sportsman. He played volleyball with all without any distinction of high and low, in a field within the *Rajbati* compound.[101] He also played badminton, tennis and billiards in the Baripada Club, which was meant for the members of the royal family and officers of the State. He loved the game of football and never failed to attend the final match of the Sriram Chandra Memorial Tournament. The players of the two teams who played in the final match were entertained in a dinner party hosted by the Maharaja himself in the Palace. Maharaja's dinner party was an added attraction, which brought many teams to participate in the football tournament.[102] During his brief stay in 1927-28, at Baripada, Kabi Chandra Kali Charan Pattnaik had endeared himself to Pratap Chandra, who then was the *Chhotrai* of Mayurbhanj. Mr. Pattnaik used to entertain him by playing the flute. At that time Pratap Chandra was learning *sitar* from *ustad* Jadu Rao who was a centurian.[103] He was a great lover of music and played on several instruments.

Pratap Chandra was a great patron of *Chhau* dance and under his royal patronage this dance form emerged out of the temporary eclipse it had suffered during the reign of Purna Chandra Bhanja Deo. Purna Chandra had a short life and he paid greater attention to the administration and reduced the annual grant to each of the *sahis*. As a consequence this dance form languished.[104] Due to lack of funds the dancers had to take up other jobs and the plight of drummers and the flutist became so miserable that they had to play their music on hire in marriage processions.[105] But Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo took a keen interest in this dance and revived it to its former glory. He put heart and soul for the development of this dance and Mayurbhanj *Chhau* had a glorious period during his reign. The Maharaja revived the annual grant of Rs.5000 to each *sahi* and the dancers were handsomely rewarded with land grants. Teams consisting of *ustads* and dancers of each *sahi* were sent by the Maharaja to observe the performance of such noted exponents of Indian dance as Uday Shankar, Amla Shanker etc. During this period classical Hindustani music was introduced in a number of dances of both *uttar* and *dakshin sahi*. Maharaja employed a Kathakali dance teacher Sri Keshab Das to teach *mudras* to the *Chhau* dancers. Later he added a forty-member Band Party having foreign musical instruments, under an Russian Bandmaster, C. Fredlis. Special grants were given to the *sahis*, which introduced new dances. Due to his munificence dances like Natraj, Gita, Kiratarjuna, Maya, Sabari, Garuda Vahana, Nabagraha, Holi, and Desh Videsh were introduced to enrich the *Chhau* repertory.[106]

Thus the cultural life of the State was greatly enriched by royal patronage and by the personal interest of the Maharaja which he took in art and culture. The *Chhau* dance became greatly popular not only inside the State but in the entire province of Orissa and Maharajas of several Princely States of Orissa like Nilgiri, Khandpara, Narasinghpur, Baramba, etc. used to attend the annual *Chhau* festival as guests of the Maharaja. Under him the State came to be known all over the province for its dance, drama and sports. Not only Pratap Chandra was a pioneer in the field of art and culture but he was also a mature politician who could take a long-range view of the future of his State.

Understanding of the Changing Times :

Two letters written by Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo, one in September 1946 to the Nawab of Bhopal, and the other in May 1946, addressed to the Maharwal of Dungarpur, throw valuable light on his political ideas and thinking,which were far in advance of his age and time. He had deeply pondered over the political situation of the country, the existence of six hundred Princely States in India, feudalistic in character and acting as lions under the British throne, the mass movement organised by Gandhi and Nehru to end the foreign rule and to establish democracy in the country including the Princely States and he had come to the conclusion that great changes in the political horizon of India were visible. A new India would be born after Independence and Pratap Chandra posed to himself the question

: What will be the role of Princely States in the new India? The Maharaja had very unconventional and revolutionary ideas regarding the future of the Princely States. In his letter to Dungarpur he wrote,

> " I have for a long time felt that I should give expression to my views on the future of Indian States, but so far I have refrained because I fear that my views, being so unconventional and bold, might be unwelcome and misunderstood".[107]

He further wrote

> " The cause of monarchy is at discount all over the globe. We are told that the institution of kingship has out lived its utility and it is an anachronism and a feudalistic relic".[108]

Referring to the pitiable conditions of the rulers in India on the eve of Independence the Maharaja wrote,

> " Let us consider our present position. It is not enviable. With the limitation and restrictions imposed on our authority by the Crown Department, our capacity for good or for evil is very limited. Besides constant interference even in the day to day administration of the State, our private affairs do not escape the scrutiny of the Resident.

> Our authority is a farce, the real Rulers are the Residents and the Political Officers. We are puppets and tools in their hands. Our protest and representation against their interference are ignored..... .We are powerless to resist, because we lost all powers to resist long ago. The yellow patches on the map of India are a mockery".[109]

In his letter also the Maharaja has very candidly and aptly described his feelings about the relation between the rulers and his subjects. He wrote,

> "We are nothing but anachronism and feudalistic relics to the vast majority of our political minded countrymen. They have no sympathy for us. They feel that we are the worst type of reactionaries, and had it not been for us, the British Rule would have long ago crumbled in India. There is no denying this, we have always taken a doubtful pride in having come to the rescue of the paramount power whenever it was in danger".[110]

Referring to the powerful democratic forces emerging in the country which would lead to the end of Princely State system, Pratap Chandra wrote to the Maharwal of Dungarpur:

> " I realise that we are at cross roads. If we try to resist the historical forces, we are doomed. The wave of democracy is rolling down on us. Either we step aside and let it roll on, or we stand in its way and get floundered. We cannot trick history and seek compromises and adjustments with the will of the people".[111]

Pratap Chandra believed that the throne was not his by succession. He had expressed many a time before his friends and also his ministers that he got the throne under fortuitous circumstances. He had foreseen that the rising tide of democracy would sweep away the Princely Order. Under these circumstances what is the duty of the rulers towards their subject? Should they fight them to preserve and protect their ancient kingdom or should they make a peaceful and honourable withdrawal by bowing down to the wishes of the people? Should the Princely States take up arms against the people for their survival and shed the blood of the people for whose protection and welfare they took a vow? These questions perturbed the Maharaja and he had a very clear conception of the role of the king at this juncture as revealed from his two letters. Long back in 1946, when Independence of India was a distant possibility, he had thought out a solution to the problem of the inevitable clash between the forces of democracy and the authoritarian rule of the Princes of India. He wrote to the Maharaja of Bhopal,

> " The only effective alternative that one can think of is voluntary liquidation of the Ruler, which, though painful to contemplate, may, to my mind, be found to be welcome and peaceful solution of the problem from the point of view of the Ruler and his people, as well as the country as a whole. The solution will, I dare say, appear to be too drastic or even fantastic to many, but it may prove to be the only realistic solution, if one takes a sufficiently long view of the matter."[112]

There is no gainsaying the fact that no ruler in India was capable of and much less willing, to take a long-range view of the problem that bedevilled the six hundred Princely States or agree to their voluntary liquidation. The Maharaja had also visualised the salutary effect of the voluntary termination of the Princely Rule on the people, and he also realised the evil consequence that may befall if the rulers adopted a defiant attitude. He wrote to Bhopal,

> "The Rulers may even be acclaimed as heroes, who, by an unprecedented act of self sacrifice, have made a valuable contribution to a permanent solution of a complicated political problem. If on the other

> hand we cling to our so-called sovereign rights and continue in a career constantly bickering with our people and British India, a renunciation of this character may be forced upon us in far less pleasant circumstances. By postponing the evil day, we may merely be denying ourselves the chances of an honourable exit from the stage, because when it comes about a later date our exit may well have the appearance of an ignominious dismissal".[113]

How prophetic the words of Maharaja proved to be. He voluntarily renounced his throne by handing over power to a Popular Ministry and when Patel confronted him at Cuttack with the question of merger, he could tell Patel that Mayurbhanj had ceased to be his kingdom and the question of merger will be answered by his people and not by him. The Maharaja had an honourable exit for which he will be remembered by the posterity with grateful encomiums. The twenty-five rulers of Orissa had to suffer ignominious dismissal by Patel, as visualised by Pratap Chandra and mentioned in his letter to Bhopal.

Pratap Chandra was aware that if the democratic urge of the people was opposed by the ruler it would lead to a confrontation and bloodshed. He wrote to the Nawab of Bhopal,

" We may eventually be confronted with an impasse which will compel us to take up arms against our own people. And speaking for myself, it would cause deep anguish to be driven in any circumstances to fight my own people to whose welfare I have devoted most of my life and energy".[114]

He wrote to the Maharwal of Dungarpur,

" We have to face the facts. I have pondered over this problem for a long time. I feel that it is a tragedy that our minds are so pre-occupied with questions of paramountcy, Honours and ceremonials, Protections and safeguards, that we have completely lost sight of one essential fact i.e., is it in keeping with our ideals of Indian kingship that we should fight our own people and oppose their wishes in regards to the type of Government they want for themselves? May be they are wrong, but does it justify us to turn them into our enemies and become objects of their hatred? At any rate, I shrink from contemplation of such a possibility. I would not like to wait till I am

> actually told to go by my people. It would be a graceless exit and quite out of tune with our tradition of honour and self-respect".[115]

In the noble sentiments expressed in the words of these two letters, one can find an echo of the Ashokan idea of kingship engraved more than two millennium ago in the rocks of Dhauli and Jaugadh. Like Ashoka, he loved his subjects as his children. Maharaja was not an hypocrite. True to his feelings and ideas, exactly two years after these letters were written, he abdicated his throne, installed a Popular Government and left for Calcutta to live the life of an ordinary citizen of India and to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

By August 1948 Pratap Chandra was painfully aware that the Ministry will not be allowed to run the State and Patel will insist on integration. Although the ministerial delegation had run to Delhi with the fond hope of saving their State, Maharaja had no doubt in his mind that the merger was only a question of time. Incidentally he was in Delhi and was staying in the Imperial Hotel when the Mayurbhanj delegation went in mid-August 1948. He even dissuaded the members not to meet Patel and to give up the idea of fighting for a lost cause. As later events proved the members of the delegations were soon disabused of their dreams and Patel even did not respond when they wished him and unceremoniously dismissed them. In contrast to the attitude of the Maharaja Pratap Chandra, integration was viewed as a great tragedy by many Princes of India when they were made to

sign the Instrument of Accession by Patel and Menon. One Raja of Central India died of heart attack immediately after signing; another collapsed weeping like a child and the Raja of Jodhpur pointed a pistol at Menon's head; and some signed in an atmosphere so lugubrious as during a cremation.[116] The prospect of losing Mayurbhanj did not worry Pratap Chandra as he sat comfortably in his room in the Imperial Hotel. He had almost forgotten the taste and flavour of kingship since December 1947 when he had put the Ministry in power and was residing most of the time in Calcutta and Shillong away from Baripada.

Of the six hundred and odd Princely States of India over which the paramountcy of the British was to lapse on the 15 August, none could claim to have a royal dynasty as old as the Bhanjas. If the Asanpat Stone inscription is to be believed the Bhanjas began their royal career as early as the 4th century A.D. when the Imperial Guptas held their sway over the whole of India. Now this glorious dynasty was to reach its end and out of its ashes would emerge a new Mayurbhanj. In August 1948, as Mr. R. C. Dash, the SP and the Maharaja sat talking in the parlour of the Imperial Hotel, the Maharaja gave a glance outside to the sprawling city of Delhi and the western horizon where the sun was setting, flooding the city with its crimson rays. Looking at this panoramic scene he remarked, "The sun of Mayurbhanj has set". The Bhanjas claimed descent from the Solar dynasty and the setting sun signified the end of their rule. After the disappointing interview with Patel some members of the delegation came to meet Maharaja. One of them, with tears

rolling down his eyes said, "Maharaja Saheb, we could not save Mayurbhanj". Pratap Chandra was amused by the crocodile tears and sarcastically said " I have lost my kingdom but I have no cause for tears. You are shedding so many tears for losing five hundred rupee– a month job!"[117]

To conclude, Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo, though not born, but destined, to rule Mayurbhanj occupied the throne at a period when the new India free from British rule was in the process of being born. Mayurbhanj was indeed fortunate in more ways than one in having him as its Ruler during this period when great changes were in the offing. He had a very firm understanding of the present and the clear vision of the future. He belonged to a very small minority of Princes who understood with great clarity that they had no place in the emerging free India. The people of India had already accepted the idea of democracy, Parliamentary form of Government, popular sovereignty, fundamental freedoms and also the principle of social justice and fair play. The continuance of the Princely State was anachronistic to all the cherished values for which India had fought a bitter struggle with the British. This clear understanding of the changing political scene was in fact the best part of Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo.

Pratap Chandra's achievement as a Ruler was indeed tremendous. He was widely accepted by the people. No other Ruler of Orissa at that point of time could match him in acceptance and popularity. His sense of personal involvement and capacity to look into details and the ability to place the right person in the right job made him a unique administrator. He had a paternal attitude towards his subjects and never desired any

confrontation with them. He was willing to abdicate, as his letters to the Maharaja of Bhopal revealed, rather than take up arms against his own subjects to perpetuate his rule. He was a lover of learning, took interest in sports and maintained a direct contact with his people at a very personal level. The Judiciary under him enjoyed complete independence from the Executive and even from the Maharaja who never interfered in any manner in the judicial process.

It would not be right to make a final estimate of this great king in this chapter as the next two chapters titled 'Praja Mandal Andolan In Mayurbhanj' and 'Popular Ministry And Merger' also throw some light on his personality and era.

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